

Broken Glasses by galwithalibrarycard

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Summary:

The darkness of the Upside-Down still has its claws in Barb. Nancy is her light in the darkness, if she could only see her clearly.

Based on an imagineyourotp prompt: *Imagine if Person A wore glasses/contacts and had really bad eyesight. Then one day, something happens to their glasses/contacts, either they get broken or get lost, so Person B keeps having to get up close for Person A to see them. Bonus if the close proximity lets them sneak in wee kisses.*

Broken Glasses

Author's Note:

I love Stranger Things and I love this ship and I just wanted some fluff and for Barb to live, so that's what I wrote! Hope you enjoy!

She's sitting on the edge of Steve Harrington's backyard swimming pool, gazing determinedly into the dark water. Avoiding the sight of the open upstairs window, and what Nancy is doing with Steve inside.

Barb doesn't want to understand why the idea of Nancy with a boy feels so *wrong* to her.

Deep inside, she already knows why, knows that it's all wrapped up in the way her heart skips when Nancy leans in close and touches her hand, wraps it in cloth, Barb's skin tingling all over against Nancy's warmth- but she forces those feelings down, forces herself to remain cold. She has no choice, she knows.

It's dangerous, to be the kind of girl who knows this, who feels like this about her best friend. About another girl. There's no mercy here, not in Hawkins, Indiana. Maybe not anywhere.

She winces, pressing her fingers tight against the poorly bandaged cut on her hand, giving into the pain. A drop of blood finds its path to the still surface of the pool.

And then the world turns upside-down.

Barb doesn't have any idea how she manages to fight off the monster. The thing is impossibly strong, its flower petal mouth clawing at her shoulder and neck- but her sheer willpower and adrenaline breaks its grip. Barb lurches for the ladder.

The monster seizes her escaping foot and Barb kicks out, stunning it. Reaching the ground level again, she runs, and she doesn't look back.

This world is dark and fuzzy at the edges, filling with stinking muck and vines twisting over every house and tree. Her favorite pink-framed glasses lie broken at the bottom of what was- what should still be- the swimming pool. It doesn't make sense.

She can't see anything, can't tell one Hawkins landmark from the next. All she can do is tear through the dark woods, calling for help. Calling for her best friend.

It's a miracle that she stumbles around in the inverted forest just long enough to find a doorway in the hollow of a tree, a doorway through which she swears she can hear Nancy, whispering her name. Looking for her. Wanting her. Like a dream.

And it all goes dark.

The cops find Barb's half-frozen body in the real forest, and she wakes up in the hospital, in the room right next door to Will Byers'. Her whole body hurts- but the room smells fresh, sterile, like cleaning fluid. Comforting.

Someone is standing in the doorway, a strange, pale humanoid figure, watching her. She looks at it and sees a blur, a fuzz of pale pinkish color, like the thing has no face at all. Any moment now, the petals will open...

Barb's screaming, terrified, *begging* the monster to leave her alone. "Please... *please*." It only comes closer, and she screws her eyes shut and clings to the bars on the edges of the hospital bed for dear life. She'll fight if she has to, she is not going back to that place, never.

Footsteps drawing ever closer, a sudden weight on the edge of the bed. Murmurs and warm breath on her skin, the thing taking her face in its soft hands.

...Soft hands?

"Hey, hey, it's okay. It's just me, Barb. It's me," says a calm, quiet voice, and she opens her eyes to see Nancy's blue ones just inches from her face. Barb blinks, managing a small smile. "N...Nancy? I

couldn't see you. You were so blurry... oh god..."

"Barb, it's okay. You can see me now, right? Am I close enough?" Nancy grins, awash in relief to see her friend again. Barb nods, but Nancy still leans closer. "I missed you," she murmurs, and quick as lightning, she presses her lips to the tip of Barb's nose, where the skin is still pink from the chill of the upside-down. Barb can feel it tingling even after Nancy pulls away to wrap her arms around Barb in a gentle hug.

And suddenly it's all too much, and Barb is sobbing, clinging to Nancy like she hasn't seen her in years. She's hysterical, crying and shaking and holding onto the girl who got her through the darkness. The nurse comes in, and changes her IV drip, and Nancy is still holding Barb when she drifts into a dreamless sleep.

A few weeks later, Barb is readjusting to being back at school. She's not just the queer girl no one cares to notice anymore. Now she's the queer girl who disappeared and came back crazy, who still misses school sometimes because she's too frightened to leave her house.

Now she can't escape the stares and the whispering and jeering in the halls. But she still has Nancy, even if she is a little jealous about sharing her with her new friends, Jonathan and the new, improved Steve Harrington, now with 100% less assholery. Allegedly.

Jonathan and Steve are getting very chummy themselves, and Nancy confesses to Barb that she's a little sad to suddenly feel like a third wheel between them. Barb tries not to feel too glad that Nancy has more time to spend with her instead.

One day, Carol and Tommy start picking on Steve, calling him a queer, giving him shit for whatever's going on between him and Jonathan.

Nancy fires back that it's none of their business, and Carol sneers, "of course you would defend those queers, you and your *dyke* girlfriend, right Wheeler?"

“*Fuck you!*” says Barb before she can stop herself, and Nancy looks around, impressed. Barb feels her lips quirk up into the tiniest, proudest smile.

But then Tommy shoves Barb, snapping that this is nothing to do with her. She tumbles to the ground, banging her knee on the dirty tile, a weight disappearing from her face. The old pair of glasses she saved from middle school, whose prescription is about three years out of date. She hasn’t been able to afford a new pair, since the Upside-Down. They fly off Barbara’s face and clatter to the ground in front of the blur that is Carol, while Steve chases Tommy off to pummel him for what he said.

Carol’s smiling her nasty smile as she looks down at the glasses. Barb knows what’s coming, holds her head high.

“Oh, look at that. I think the *queer* lost something. Let me find it for her,” Carol sneers. “I think your ugly glasses are right... here!”

And she brings her foot down on the old wire-rimmed glasses with a **SNAP**. She kicks the shattered frame towards Barb, slivers of fiberglass ricocheting off the slick floor.

Barb visibly recoils, trying to get away, but everywhere she turns are more faceless spectators, laughing and ready to unfold their flaps of skin to reveal gaping fanged maws, to engulf her body whole, like hungry snakes bearing down on her frozen form. She can’t move, can’t get up, just like in the Upside-Down, because she’s almost safe as long as predators like the Demagorgon and Carol can’t see her movements.

Everything recedes into the blur of fear and grief, and even though somewhere she knows this is just a reaction to the trauma she’s faced, Barb can’t do anything but give into it. She’s alone. Alone...

“Barb. Barb,” says a voice that’s too soft and urgent and *human* to belong to the nightmare. Those same small hands rest carefully on Barb’s broad shoulders, and the smell of flowers, like Nancy’s perfume, fills Barb’s nostrils.

She opens her eyes and the first thing she sees is the bright blue of

Nancy's own eyes, her long lashes fluttering inches from Barb's face. Even without the glasses, Barb can see her best friend perfectly, and she is the opposite of the Upside-Down, in every way.

"Hey, you're okay," Nancy says, cupping Barb's cheek. "It's over, they can't get to you here."

"You don't know that," Barb chokes, suddenly fighting back tears. And that's when Nancy lets herself get angry.

"Listen, *fuck* being afraid. I fought a monster from another dimension and survived. I can protect you from those idiots. I should have protected you just now. I'm so sorry."

Barb shakes her head, wants to laugh at how much Nancy has changed- but she was always this fiery, really. She's unshakeable, standing firm, reaching out a hand to help Barb up.

The girls go home together at the end of the day, and Mrs. Wheeler puts out chocolate-chip cookies which they secret away up to Nancy's room before the little kids get home. Without her glasses, Barb is blind as a bat, as her father always says.

So Nancy reads their history study guide out loud, quizzing Barb and laughing when she holds up the flash cards they've made and Barb can't read them. She sidles closer and closer towards Barb's end of the bed, asking, "Is this better? How about this?"

It's almost exactly like it always was between them, before monsters and magic and parallel worlds. They're just two girls spoiling their dinner with cookies and procrastinating on their homework, and Nancy's hand is innocent where it presses against Barb's, her head falling onto Barb's shoulder as the evening wears on.

This is the only difference. Nancy is more affectionate, physical, as if afraid that Barb will be yanked away from her again and she has to get in as much cuddling as possible before that happens. It's the desperation of someone who has learned just what she has to lose.

"I wish I could see you, Nancy," Barb sighs. "I'm so tired of not

having glasses, it's like being half-asleep and groggy 24/7."

"Is this better?" Nancy leans in. The bubbling mass of peach and dark brown before Barb's eyes starts to consolidate into a face. She laughs and shakes her head.

"How about now?" Nancy is right up in Barb's space now, pressing a playful kiss to her cheek. "Can you see me now?"

"Yeah, but you're still just a little bit blurred around the edges. How do I know for sure you aren't a pod person?" Barb teases, and Nancy grins.

"Can a pod person kiss your nose again?" she asks, and Barb smiles back, nodding. Nancy kisses her nose, sliding up next to her properly now. She fits perfectly against Barb, so weightless it's like she isn't even there. It's like holding a lightning bug, Barb thinks. You can feel her life fluttering against yours and even in the middle of the night, there's no complete darkness allowed.

"Thank you," Barb says quietly.

"For the kiss?" Nancy asks, unmoving.

"For looking for me. For caring. You never stopped trying to save me, and I... I didn't think anyone... never mind." Barb sighs into Nancy's hair. "Just... thank you."

"Barbara, you're my best friend. I love you, and you were *missing*. Of *course* I didn't stop looking for you until you were home where you belong. I always will, okay?" Nancy murmurs.

"...I love you too, Nance," Barb says softly, astonished that the words are finally leaving her mouth. Her heart is beating a mile a minute and yet everything is so calm, so safe. There's nothing to be afraid of, not here. Not anymore.

She kisses Nancy, quick and careful, on the lips, before she can talk herself out of it. Embarrassment and exhilaration pulse through her brain and she pulls back, shaking. "Oh God, I'm sorry, Nance... was that okay?"

Nancy just giggles, her forehead against Barb's, and whispers, "Duh. Come here."

The rest of the evening is silky lips dancing across Barb's face, Nancy's soft hands in her hair, their shared laughter and warmth rising through the room like pinpricks of fire. Nancy's mouth against her own is so bright and shining, monsters are no match for it. It's a dream against the nightmares, a light against the dark. The world is right-side-up again.

It's still hard to be strange in Hawkins, Indiana. But with Nancy, Barb finds she doesn't mind it so much after all.

Author's Note:

Barb is a lesbian and Nancy is bisexual and I love them. Probably going to write another fic soon where they double date with Stonathan! ;)